

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 23, 2020**

The April 23, 2020 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Kevin Alexander, Professor of Biology WSU, Hunter & Anglers
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
Matt McCombs, USFS
Christie Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
Scott Borden, WCU
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town Council
Sandy Snell, National Park Service
Noel Durant, CB Land Trust
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Chris Parmeter, CPW
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison
Kimberly Shappert, At-Large Community Member
Elijah Waters, BLM
Joe Laughlin, US Forest Service Trails

Others in Audience:

Elizabeth Bauer, WCU MEM Program
Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works
Hedda Peterson
Sally Thode
Jennifer Fenwick
Pam King
Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Nick Catmur
Aaron Drendel, BLM

Staff:

Cathie Pagano, Community Development Director
Joe Lavorini, Gunnison County Stewardship Coordinator-National Forest Foundation
Hillary Seminick, Community Development Planner
Rachel Sabbato, Community Development Planner

CALL TO ORDER: Alexander called the April 23, 2020 meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

Approval of Agenda

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 23, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Durant and seconded by Borden to approve the January 23, 2020 meeting minutes as proposed. Motion passed unanimously, Alexander abstained since he was not at the meeting.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 27, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Folken and seconded by Kugler to approve the February 27, 2020 meeting minutes as proposed. Motion passed unanimously.

STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR INTRODUCTION

Pagano introduced Joe Lavorini as the County Stewardship Coordinator. Lavorini gave background of where he is from, experience and goals. Pagano will be stepping back to allow Lavorini to take over the group.

FEE PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

McCombs explained that the STOR Committee identified in the past the need for developing recreation fees. This would require two things, exploring the forest fee authority in contrast to approaches other communities were taking, advanced funding proposals that relied on tax increase on local communities or straight investments from governmental entities. They are continuing use MEM students. With funding from the Forest Service, they were able to develop a contract with Western State Colorado to bring in Lizzy Bauer to develop a fee proposal.

Bauer presented the fee proposal. In July 2019 the STOR committee passed a unanimous decision to move forward on proposing a recreation fee in Gunnison Area National Forest, specifically in Crested Butte. They would change the sites from dispersed to designated. Bauer went over examples of what impacts they are seeing in dispersed camping areas throughout the five gulches in Crested Butte and surrounding areas.

The public, 85% of who responded, were in favor of changing the camp sites from dispersed to designated. The Forest Service has committed to developing 200 sites in the first phase.

Right now, the Forest Service has over a \$500 billion deficit in deferred maintenance. There has been an increase in demand in need in recreational areas but are not receiving the funding. Bauer went over the history of recreational fees; 1950- Granger-Thye Authority, 1965- Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, 1996- Recreation Fee Demonstration Program, 2004- Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). There are a few types of fees that can be collected through FLREA; Standard Amenities, Expanded Amenities. If they implement FLREA in the Gunnison National forest they would have installments of infrastructure and there will be management and monitoring of recreational use and facilities.

There are a few successful models that the Forest Service can look at to help with developing implementing FLREA. Bauer looked at Red Rock Pass, they offer a grand annual pass that incorporates access to the concessioner sites in that area, including access to recreation areas managed by the Forest Service. The Southern California Adventure Pass, offers a discounted second vehicle pass if purchased at the same time. The Northwest Forest Pass, Washington and Oregon collaborated together to create a recreation fee plan that incorporate the recreation pass throughout the two States. There is also an option to incorporate a winter recreation pass. Vail Resort offers a recreation pass, world class recreation opportunities for motorized and non-motorized activities.

Bauer went over some past litigation in regards to recreation fees. Recommendations in order for the Forest Service to protect them from litigation it is recommended that they make sure all amenities are present- do not charge if amenities are missing, no missing site- all sites that meet criteria should be included, clear, visible signage and maps, remove any inconsistent signs, establish fee- free parking within .5 miles from all amenity sites, and building up a public communication piece for the fees, what fees are generated and how the Forest Service is using the funds and how they directly benefit the public. There is no way to

incorporate a discount for specific groups due to discrimination but they can offer a senior pass, an interagency access pass (for persons with a disability), limit costs of annual passes- locals discounts, fee free days (the area can offer as many as they would like throughout the year), volunteer hours to obtain a pass, and adopt a site.

Consideration for forward progress: Options for fee proposal cost schedule- how to define the parameters of the fee schedule, summer and/or winter passes or both, define public outreach h communities, identify potential business partnerships, and form fee proposal subcommittee.

Discussion followed on the current dispersed camping areas around Crested Butte and what's going on at the sites right now. Schappert asked how many dispersed campsites are out there now. Drendel explained that it's hard to get the exact number of sites that are out there right now, because some of them are combined. They looked at all of the impacted areas in the six gulches in the Crested Butte area. There are approximately 200 campsites that they are going to be designated in the first phase. They came up with the areas closer to town, right when you enter on to the forest, as you go up each drainage a lot of the denser packed areas will be closer to town. Each drainage will have a high-density area near town with a toilet. As you get further in the backcountry they are designating sites that are less dense and spread out. Kolodziej asked whether there will be campsites further out, way in the backcountry will have a post showing it is designated? Drendel explained that there will be a post, with a number and each site will have a fire ring. Kolodziej asked if they would be paid campsites? Drendel explained that they are still determining that and working on a fee schedule. Kolodziej asked if there will be enforcement out there to enforce the fees, who would do it? Bauer explained that the revenues from fees generated would go to staff, Forest protection officers and other staff to manage those areas. There are also criteria for visitor protection, a volunteer camp host, as long as visitors have a resource to go to if a problem occurs.

Alexander wanted to know if they are looking for a subcommittee. McCombs reported that they will need to move forward on implementation and setting up infrastructure to legally implement a fee program. McCombs thinks it would be helpful to have a subcommittee to help them refine the process and ensure the STOR committee feedback and support is there. They will have little success if there is not public support and he believes that they will need the subcommittee for that. Alexander wanted to know how many people they would need. McCombs believe four people would be helpful. Alexander asked about time commitment and frequency. Bauer stated that she was envisioning that over the next few weeks, months, a lot of communication would be done through email, task delegation, identify who would be most apt at different tasks, discussion on how to define some of the parameter of what would go into the proposal piece. Bauer believes a commitment of about an hour a week. Alexander stated that if anyone is interested they could let them know through the video chat McCombs wanted to know how everything is still sitting with the committee, do they believe it is still worthy of the groups work and if this is a good solution. Norton believes that this is the best way to move forward. Everyone seems to believe that it would be helpful. Pagano asked that McCombs give some kind of time frame of when it would start. McCombs stated that it would be at least a year, year and a half. Dave Ochs, Joellen Fonken, John Norton, Joe Lovarini, Kim Schappert, and Chris Parmeter are interested in being part of the subcommittee.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Norton reported that they had an ebike subcommittee meeting and hope to have another one before the next meeting, and would like to be on the next agenda. They will see what they can do but Pagano stated it may not be possible because they have another item on but that they will put it on a future agenda.

Durant reported that the Slate River Trailhead Design subcommittee is under contract with DHM design for the conceptual planning process for the new Slate River Trailhead. Their design team came over right before the closure and started the process and they have materials that they are revising, that will go out in the next couple of weeks. They are holding off on public engagement until they have a better sense of what the summer looks like. They will probably push it out to fall.

Logan with the communication group stated that the kiosks are still ready to be installed at the river access points but are still on hold due to the current situation. Sabatto reported that they got into the Gunnison

Country Times summer insert with the articles that Parmeter wrote and that they are working on brand identity and how to get out there for brand identity. Some of the money was put towards the Peanut Lake signage project and that was completed. Parmeter reported that they will have a full-page ad in the Gunnison Country Magazine. They will have a little blurbs throughout the magazine.

Pagano reported that GOCO funds are on hold during this time.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 4th Thursday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, Co. 81230, unless changed for a specific reason.

ADJOURN: The April 23, 2020 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 3:51 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III